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SUBJECT: NGOS COPE WITH KIDNAPPING THREATS IN IRAQ, RESPOND TO NEEDS IN FALLUJAH

1. A quick survey of NGO representatives in Amman revealed that most relief agencies had pulled their international staff from Iraq in early April in anticipation of violence surrounding the April 9 anniversary of the fall of Baghdad and the Arba'een Shi'a pilgrimage. As IRD Iraq Representative Richard Harmon explained to refcoord on April 8, the convergence of the anniversary with the Shi'a pilgrimage seemed to create inviting opportunities for terrorists and hence greater security risks for humanitarian workers. Because of these risks, Harmon gave his international staff an extended Easter holiday and asked them not to return to work until mid-April. NGO Coordinating Committee for Iraq (NCCI) Representative Elodie Cantier-Aristide confirmed on April 12 that most NGOs had instituted similar policies and pulled their international staff out of Iraq well before the current violence and kidnappings began. Following the kidnapping of international relief workers and missionaries, UNAMI NGO Coordinator Maura Lynch said that most NGO security officers have recommended that all international staff depart Iraq immediately.

2. In spite of the kidnapping threats, some NGOs continue to provide emergency relief, particularly in the Fallujah area. Cantier-Aristide confirmed that two NGO relief convoys entered Fallujah April 10-11, organized by Islamic Relief, Premiere Urgence and UPT. The convoys delivered medical supplies and some non-food items donated by UNHCR. ICRC and the GOJ also sent separate medical convoys to Fallujah. According to Lynch, Iraqi mosques are providing ad hoc assistance to civilians fleeing Fallujah, most of whom are headed to family and friends in the Baghdad area. IOM is preparing to provide further assistance to Iraqis displaced by the current round of fighting but Lynch cautioned that UN security restrictions will affect IOM's ability to respond.

3. CPA Baghdad minimize considered.
GNEHM